

Absence of pan-European cormorant management puts fishery and environmental policy goals at risk

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Committee on Fisheries

*The cormorant
problematic affecting EU
fisheries and aquaculture*



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Foto: Bernd Stemmer



Absence of pan-European cormorant management puts fishery and environmental policy goals at risk

- **EU policy goals**
- **Cormorants impacting policy goals**
- **What is going wrong?**
- **Call for Action!**

EU policy goals

- **CFP**: Sustainable food production in aquaculture
- **WFD**: Healthy waters across Europe
- **FFH**: Favourable conservation status for habitat types and species



Cormorants impacting EU policy goals

- **CFP:** Sustainable food production in aquaculture
 - Loss of valuable aquatic food production



„Peitzer Teiche“, Brandenburg, DE, 1060 ha area



FFH, RAMSAR, SPA

**Losses caused by the cormorants, Winter 21/22:
stocked: 12.000 kg carp (1y)
harvested: 250 kg (-98 %)**

Sustainable pond management not possible!



Cormorants impacting EU policy goals

- **CFP:** Sustainable food production in aquaculture
 - Loss of valuable aquatic food production
- **WFD:** Healthy waters across Europe
 - Loss of ecosystem services due to unmanaged predation



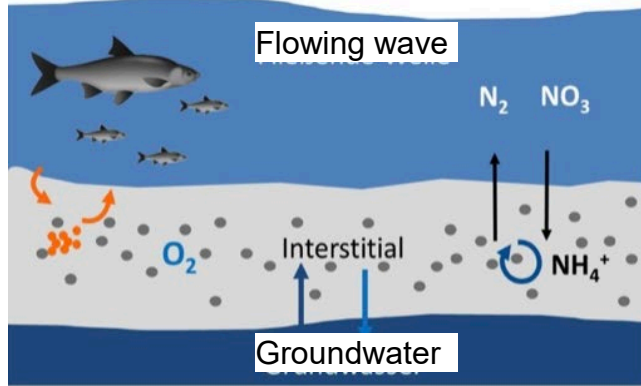
Loss of ecosystem services due to unmanaged predation

Impacts in the water body

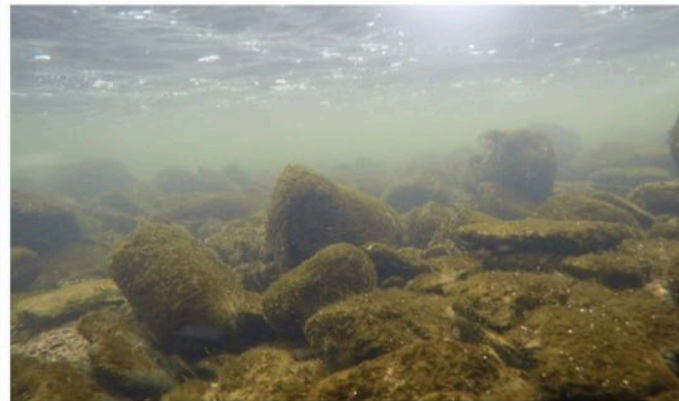
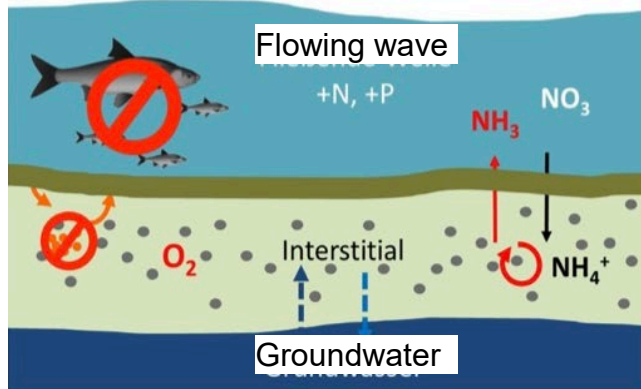
Habitat function

Turnover function

Clear water and clean bottom



Turbid water and algae bottom



<https://www.argenister.de/fische-als-oekosystemdienstleister/>



Publications

Wetjen, M., Hübner, D., Seehausen, O., & Schulz, R. (2020). Genetic diversity of endangered *Chondrostoma nasus* in the River Rhine system: Conservation genetics considerations on stocking and reintroduction. *Knowledge & Management of Aquatic Ecosystems*, (421), 25.

Hübner, D., Gerke, M., Fricke, R., Schneider, J., & Winkelmann, C. (2020). Cypriniform fish in running waters reduce hyporheic oxygen depletion in a eutrophic river. *Freshwater Biology*, 65(9), 1518-1528.

Gerke, M., Hübner, D., Schneider, J., & Winkelmann, C. (2021). Can top-down effects of cypriniform fish be used to mitigate eutrophication effects in medium-sized European rivers?. *Science of The Total Environment*, 755, 142547.

Cormorants impacting EU policy goals

- **CFP:** Sustainable food production in aquaculture
 - Loss of valuable aquatic food production
- **WFD:** Healthy waters across Europe
 - Loss of ecosystem services due to unmanaged predation
- **FFH:** Favourable conservation status for habitat types and species
 - Loss of biodiversity





Freshly caught grayling by a cormorant, Winter 2010

When the photographer appeared, the cormorant had spat out the fish.

location: German low mountain range water for which there is no historical evidence of the cormorant.

Breeding colony, Reservoir Schwerte-Geisecke, DE



1997



2003



2005

What is going wrong?



Cormorants are protected by EU Birds directive



European Wild Birds Directive 2009/147/EC

Directive allows Member States to make exceptions

“16 Kormoranverordnungen”

- Only outside of natura 2000 sites. Time and geographically limited.
- Subject to change after elections
- Constant legal fight with bird protection organizations

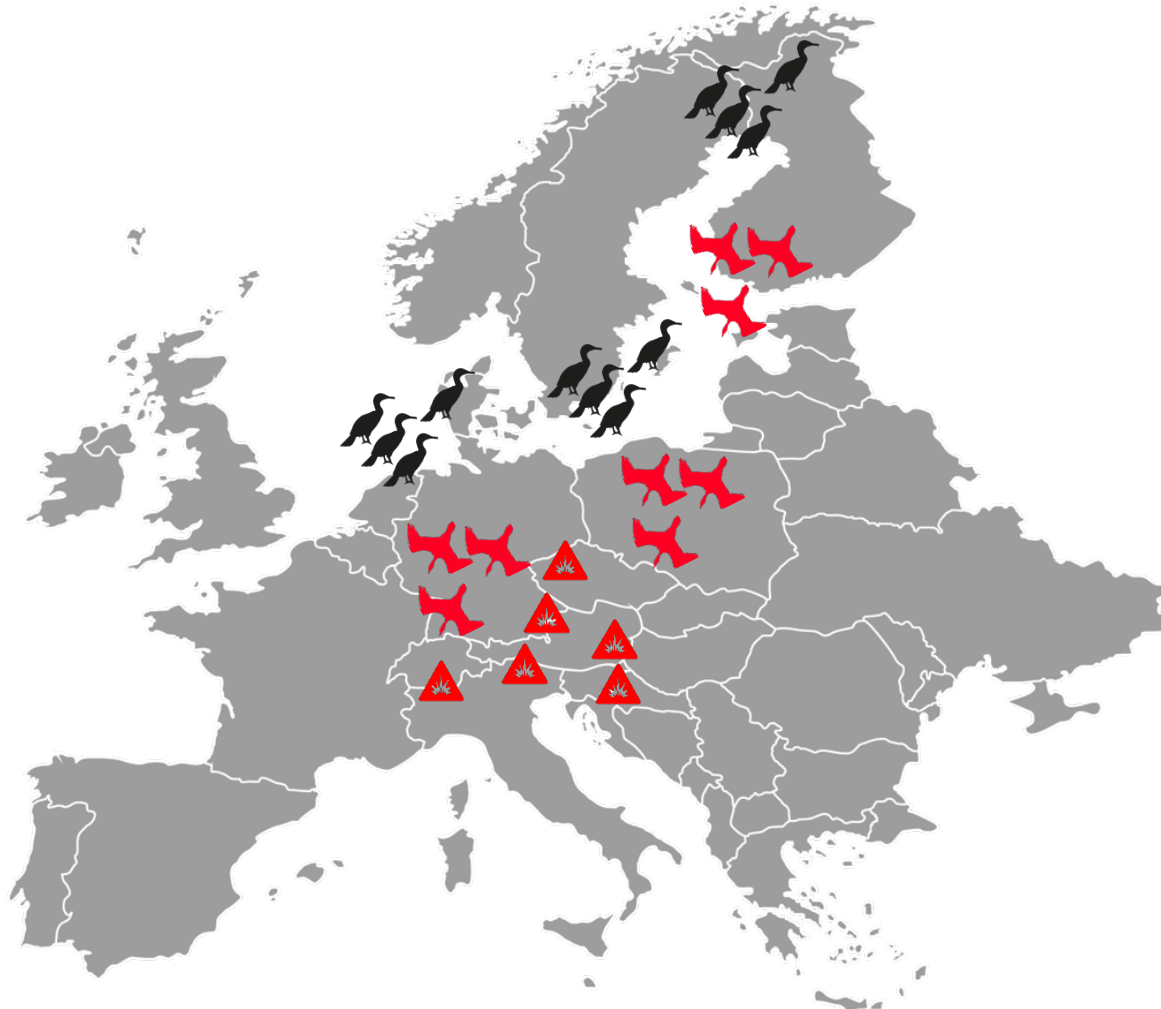
16 Federal states

Member State

Responsibility belongs to federal states



Breeding areas are detached from damaged areas



- Cormorant breeding areas without major impact on local fish population
- Birds migrate to warmer areas during winter
- Massive impact (up to total loss) in other areas due to feeding cormorants



Grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*)

Call for Action!

- Establishment of an European Cormorant **Managementplan** based on:
 - Pan-European **population model** to ensure
 - **stable cormorant population**
 - **stable fish populations**

